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ABSTRACT

Generalizations and implications of results from three National Science Foundation studies of elementary and secondary social studies education are reported. Results indicate that the teacher's beliefs, values, knowledge, and techniques are the key to what happens in the classroom and that textbook content rather than inquiry tends to be the center of instruction in social studies. Also, the back to basics movement is important to teachers. This commitment has serious implications because it tends to take students away from using social studies content as a means of teaching reading. In addition, results indicate that teachers have different views of schooling than do university professors and curriculum developers. Major concerns of teachers are classroom management and socialization, or teaching students to behave in the system and how to learn from printed materials. Further, many teachers do not feel comfortable with innovations and with new curricula. Other generalizations are that teachers function in a system which supports a stable view of society; the principal is an important part of the teacher's social system; and teachers want to be accepted by the community, parents, and students. Implications for curriculum development include the need for developers (1) to help modify the social system to relieve pressure on teachers; (2) to recognize that financial and moral support of the principal are important for adoption efforts; and (3) to recognize the importance of the teacher's commitment to stability and opposition to change. (KC)

THE NSF STUDIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR LAW AND HUMANITIES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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American Bar Association Law and Humanities in the Elementary Schools Project

Tahoe Summer Institute

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I have been impressed lately by the way we get caught in modes of thinking. For example, educators don't seem to think well metaphorically, although it is an important mode for advancing knowledge. You and I learned, when we took our philosophy of science courses, about theories and deducing and testing hypotheses. That is a nice model, but apparently it does not describe science adequately. A major way that science advances is through metaphoric thought.

Recently, reading one of my favorite journals for keeping up-to-date with the world (it is relevant to all sorts of issues)--Newsweek magazine--I ran across a review of a book called The Body in Question by Jonathan Miller. It is a history of physiology, the science of understanding the body. The reviewer points out that the theme of the book is that the major steps in understanding how our bodies function have come through metaphorical reasoning. For example, the difference between Galen who was studying circulation of blood in the 2nd Century and William Harvey in the 17th Century is that at the time Harvey was doing his work, he had the example of the pump which was being used in civil engineering work then. Using the pump as a metaphor enabed him to comprehend the circulatory system.

What I would like to ask you to do is reverse that process. Physiologists have used metaphor to understand the body. I think that the body

can serve as a metaphor for insights into our understanding of schools. In the review, the reviewer of The Body in Question says, quoting in part from Miller, "Our intelligence, sense organs and nervous system are designed to tell us what is going on outside us, while 'compared to our knowledge of the external world we have a very limited acquaintance with our own physique'. Certain vital parts--heart, liver and kidneys--are, when working properly, absent from our 'felt' sense of ourselves, and even the pain caused by malfunction is an inexact guide to what's happening inside."

Now think of that for a minute. Here's your own body, the thing you should really know; but often you know nothing about what is going on in it. I may have a cancer growing in me right now and not even know it. You would think you could sense your own body. But even when you get signals, their meaning is often not clear. You may call the doctor because you think you are having a heart attack, but he says, "Oh, no, too many onions"--or some such thing.

It seems to me that this notion of the body--our outward-directed senses with very little sensitivity to what is going on inside--makes a very good metaphor for the school. As a matter of fact, those of us who are in the schools--perhaps particularly those of us who are at the university and thinking about schools--are often very unaware, very insensitive to their inner workings. Our thoughts, our whole way of thinking, are directed elsewhere. Even if we get a signal that something is wrong we often don't know what it means. Remember, not too many months ago we found out that test scores were declining. And like the person who gets a chest pain and doesn't know what it means, we had no idea what the score decline meant. There has been plenty of conjecture about what might be causing the decline in test scores, but nobody really knows. So I find that metaphorical

reasoning from our insensitivity and own lack of knowledge about our bodies to apply to our knowledge about the school.

To extend the metaphor, the National Science Foundation realized a few years ago that we didn't know very much about the school. And NSF commissioned three studies to try to find out what was going on in science, mathematics, and social science/social studies education. One involved twenty-year (1955-75) reviews of the research literature. The one in social studies[1] has some interesting conclusions. Another was a standard type of educational study--a national survey,[2] done very well by survey standards. It asked teachers and administrators about such things as materials and textbooks used, concerns, assistance needed. The results tell us what they said, but not what they do or what they don't do. The third study--extending the body metaphor--was much more like an X-ray examination. It was an ethnographic, participant observation type of study, done by a group from the University of Illinois.[3] Ten sites were studied.

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[1] Karen B. Wiley. The status of pre-college science, mathematics, and social science education: 1955-1975. Volume III: Social science education. Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., 1977. Report to the National Science Foundation on Contract No. C7620667. Available from: GPO, #038-000-00363-1, $6.25.

[2] Iris R. Weiss. Report of the 1977 National Survey of science, mathematics, and social studies education. Report to the National Science Foundation on Contract No. C7619848. Center for Educational Research and Evaluation, Research Triangle Institute, March 1978. Available from: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), Washington, D.C. 20402, #038-000-00364-0, $6.50; National Technical Information Service (NTIS), U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, VA 22151, #PB280192/AS, $15.00; Education Research Information Clearing House (ERIC), 4833 Rugby Avenue--Suite 303 Bethesda, MD 20014, #ED 152565, $1.16 microfiche, $32.81 paper.

[3] Robert E. Stake and Jack A. Easley, Jr. Case studies in science education. Report to the National Science Foundation on Contract No. C7621134. Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation and Committee on Culture and Cognition, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, January 1978. Available from: GPO, Volume I: The case reports, #038-000-00377-1, $7.25, Volume II: Design, overview and general findings, #038-000-00376-3, $6.50; NTIS, total set, #PB282840, $76.75.

(Really eleven, but we can forget about the eleventh one for our purposes. It was a special site, the Columbus, Ohio city schools during the winter of 1977 when fuel was low and Columbus school buildings had to be shut down. It was a good opportunity to study what happens when you move education out of a classroom into other settings, but it isn't really relevant to our concerns here.) A site was defined as a high school with the feeder schools that send students to it. Schools were selected to represent different geographic, socio-economic, ethnic factors but not on a national probability basis. A major criterion was that persons with field experience be available to go into the school districts for long periods of time as is necessary with participant-observer field studies. Some excellent insights came out of the field studies.

What I would like to do now is share a few of the results of these studies. It is a difficult thing to do briefly, since there is so much that is interesting. As a matter of fact, I would urge you to read the original case studies, which are fascinating. The synthesis chapters that Bob Stake and Jack Easley[4] did are also interesting. My comments are based on the interpretive report that O.L. Davis, Suzanne Helburn, and I[5] did for the National Council for the Social Studies at the request of the National Science Foundation. I will hit some highlights. Some of the things I say may seem fairly obvious, but I think they are important to repeat, and to indicate that there now is some confirmation from a fairly substantial data base. I don't want to be accused of over-generalizing,

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[4]See footnote 3, Vol. II

[5]James P. Shaver, O.L. Davis, Jr., and Suzanne W. Helburn. An interpretive report on the status of pre-college social studies education based on three NSF-funded studies. Report to the National Science Foundation. Purchase Order No. 78-SP-1123. Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1978. (Available from James P. Shaver, Utah State University.); The status of social studies education: Impressions from three NSF studies, Social Education, 1979, 43, pp. 150-153.

even though I am going to make rather broad statements. American education and social studies in particular, is so diverse that you can find almost any kind of teacher you want to find. So for everything I say, you are going to be able to say, "But I know a teacher that isn't like that." And I would reply, "I do, too." But what I will try to describe is American education, and social studies, generally. One of the things that I hope comes out of this overview is the realization that the participants in this conference are atypical. You are not very representative of American education. And the people with whom you come in contact tend not to be very representative of American education. One of the things that I want to emphasize with the metaphor of the body is that we need to be cautious when we think about innovative change even in our own school buildings or districts. But when we go beyond our own schools or districts, we need to be extremely cautious about the assumptions we make about what American teachers are like and about what is going on in classrooms.

I will try to emphasize the information from the case studies about elementary schools, but there will be much overlap with items about secondary schools. Following are a few of these generalizations, starting with one that is obvious, but often forgotten.

The teacher is the key to what happens to kids in social studies education. We can do all the great curriculum development work we want, but the person who really determines what happens to children is the teacher. And what happens is a function of the teacher's beliefs and values, the teacher's knowledge of the curriculum work that has been done and knowledge of teaching techniques, and then how the teacher happens to put the knowledge and values together and responds to students at a particular time in a particular classroom. At that point, all of us are irrelevant. That one person, the teacher, is the key. And, most social studies teachers

from elementary to secondary school have a very strong textbook orientation.

The textbook is the center of instruction in social studies education. The textbook orientation shapes what happens in schools, and in social studies in particular. The focus tends to be on the content of textbooks, not on inquiry and not on teaching students to think. Elementary school teachers are focused less on content. This was an interesting finding for me because it is something I have sensed working with elementary school teachers, as compared to secondary school teachers. Secondary school teachers often get upset if you suggest anything to disturb their course content. Elementary school teachers are more concerned about children than are secondary school teachers, and so are more willing to change. That difference in orientation was confirmed by the case studies.

As a matter of fact, there is a national curriculum, not because it has been imposed but because individual districts select from a common pool of textbooks, all of which tend to be fairly much alike; and teachers all over the country teach from those texts about the same things in social studies education. The impact of all of the "New Social Studies" projects has been a drop in the bucket compared to what goes on in American schools.[6] Somewhere, it depends on who makes the estimate, between 10% and 25% of the social studies teachers in this country have used materials from at least one of the New Social Studies projects. And a great many other teachers are not even aware that there had been such a thing as New Social Studies. And when you drop names like MACOS-Man a Course of Study--which we might think everyone would know about, if for no other reason than the national controversy--there are great numbers of teachers across the

[6] However, it is important to note that the possibly subtle influences of the "New Social Studies" projects on social studies textbooks have not been investigated systematically.

country who don't know about MACOS, or who have never heard of such things as Lawrence Kohlberg's approach to moral education.

Back to the basics is important to teachers. Interestingly, elementary and secondary teachers both agree that the basics of reading and math and even of writing are important and deserving of prime attention. It is not that the basics are being forced on teachers by the public. The teachers agree and they want attention to the basics. At the elementary school, social studies tends to fare better than science, which appears to be suffering as a result of attention to the basics. The reasons that social studies tends to fare better are two-fold: One is that elementary school teachers tend to define social studies partly in terms of kids learning to relate to one another and they aren't going to give that up. They are going to deal with interactions among kids regardless of content. And, second, some of the materials used to teach reading have social studies content. There is not much science content in readers for elementary school. Ironically, in light of the recognized importance of the basics, there tends to be a strong belief among teachers, more so at the secondary level but even at the elementary level, that reading is a prerequisite skill. You have to teach kids to read so they can do things like social studies. It is not that you learn to read while you learn other things, as on-going development. That belief has serious implications, because it tends to take people away from using social studies content as a means of teaching reading.

Teachers and university professors and curriculum developers have different views of schooling. It is almost like teachers, on the one hand, and professors and curriculum developers, on the other, are dealing with two different schools--two different realities. And that, of course, has

been one of the major reasons that many innovations have not been accepted. Let me expand on that a bit.

Probably, the major concern of teachers is the management of students. Whether you are a secondary school teacher who is confronted with five to six classes of 30 to 40 students in each all day long, or whether you are an elementary school teacher who deals with somewhere between 25 and 40 students all day long, classroom management is the primary concern.

Teachers are also concerned with socialization. Socialization in two senses. The first has to do with citizenship and instilling American values, a concern with which many of us resonate, although progressive intellectuals in our field argue that inculcation is never justified. I have advocated for years that the inculcation of basic values can be consistent with democracy, and that it is now beginning to be in style again, even among some university professors, makes me feel good. Teachers, elementary and secondary, science as well as social studies, want students to be committed to American values. They may not agree on what those values are, but they see one of the purposes of schools as the instilling of commitment to the American system. The second concern with socialization is more directly school-related. The concern is largely management based. "Students," teachers say, "need to learn how to behave in the system. That's part of life--they need to learn how to behave during school, in part because when they get out of school they are going to have to conform. You know, when the boss tells them to do something, they are going to have to do it. It is very important that they learn that now in school--and besides, it makes my management job much simpler. They need to learn to follow orders and not be disruptive. Part of this is getting students ready for what is coming ahead. Getting them ready for the next grade, because if they can't do

some very important things--like if they don't know that when you do a homework assignment you put your name in the upper right hand corner--what is Ms. Jones going to think of me as a teacher?" That sort of socialization ties into the textbook orientation. Teachers view one of the most important purposes of school-related socialization to be helping students learn how to learn from printed materials: How to do homework assignments. How to answer questions at the end of the chapters. How, then, to respond to questions in class based on the written text.

The use of content is relevant here. First, content is used to manage students, and this upsets individual professors. A student is disruptive and the teacher says, "O.K. Johnny you do three more questions tomorrow." Or, "If you're going to misbehave, read another chapter." Content is used as a management tool. Content is not an end in itself as it is to the university professor. And, it is a means in another way. It is a means of inculcating the very important values which teachers believe in. One of the main purposes of social studies content to social studies teachers, even in elementary school, is to create a positive aura of our country, its history and its political institutions. It looks like teachers and university professors are both interested in content--but for very different reasons.

The use of inquiry and other innovative materials is influenced by teachers' orientations. To use inquiry and innovative materials, teachers have to discard what they are now doing and read new resources and learn to behave in new ways. One of the findings from the National Survey is that a lot of teachers do not feel comfortable with inquiry methods. They reported that they had not been taught to use inquiry methods. Stop to

think why. What is their model of teaching? It is the teachers they had, and they, including their university professors, did not teach using inquiry. It is the rare university professor who is an inquiry teacher. The irony is that during the period of the New Social Studies, university professors got the credit for being innovators and encouraging inquiry, whereas one of the major problems of social studies education is that the very model of the good teacher is a university professor who is very non-inquiry, a lecturer from whom you get good grades by being able to take good notes and regurgitating content. So say all of us Phi Beta Kappas, right? You don't have to learn a thing as long as you can remember it long enough to put it down on tests.

But inquiry and other innovative curricula not only make teachers feel uncomfortable because they don't know how to use the methods, but because they upset the teacher's management system. The major problem facing them is, How do I cope with these kids all day long? Teachers love students--that came through clearly, and is nice to know. But, nevertheless, when you bring in a new curriculum, it often upsets the teacher's classroom system. So, the university professor seems unrealistic, and even antagonistic to the real concerns of the classroom teacher. Professors seem utopian to school teachers, and I suspect that to a large extent they are.

And as a matter of fact, district supervisors ought not take too much comfort, because teachers tend to look at district supervisors about the same way. They say supervisors are not very helpful. One reason is that they are spread too thin. In most districts one supervisor deals with as many as 200 teachers. But the worst thing that can happen to district

supervisors--who for some reason move out of the classroom anyhow, and then, teachers believe, very quickly forget what it was like to be in the classroom, the demands of facing the kids, of having to handle all the problems that come up and managing it--from the teacher's point of view, is to go to graduate school! What happens? They become more like university professors and understand what goes on in the classroom even less, and are of less help.

A very interesting phenomenon is that teachers and district supervisors, district office personnel, seem, consciously or not, to do a good job of isolating themselves from one another. The major means of communication tends to be bulletins and memos from the central office. One of the most frustrating memos that comes to teachers is the announcement of obligatory attendance to hear a guest consultant from the university tell them how to teach.

Teachers function in a social system that controls important sanctions. It is very important to recognize that there are good reasons why teachers are like they are. There is a very important support system for maintaining the, what you might call, stability view of society which tends to influence what teachers teach. It is not just a matter of them being lazy, and it is not sour grapes. They really want to do a good job. But it is difficult. Not only because classroom management is difficult, but because they are part of a social system that we often forget about as curriculum developers. Part of that social system are the teachers to whom they look for approval.

The major source of valid information for teachers is other teachers. Teachers like inservice institutes if the institutes allow them to share

"bags of tricks" with one another. (I don't mean "bags of tricks" in a negative way.) Institutes are not judged as good if their purpose is to force the teachers to reconceptualize what they are doing in social studies, which is what most of us want to do when we put on institutes.

The principal is an important part of the teacher's social system. Principals have a lot of power over teachers. In big cities, for example, they can make the difference between teaching in a nice plushy school and being in an inner-city school where a lot of teachers don't want to be. And principals, as we all know, in general tend very much to like orderliness, which fits very well with all the teachers' emphasis on school-related socialization.

Parents are very important to teachers. Parents are an important part of the teacher's social system in two different senses. One is that parents come in to see teachers about their children. The irony is that parents who themselves disliked social studies because of the memorization of dates and other content, come in and complain if teachers are not teaching social studies as they experienced it. That is a very important source of pressure. There is another very important sense in which parents are important to teachers, and we often forget this. University professors and curriculum developers are not very important parts of the teacher's social system. We don't have many things that teachers want. But teachers want to be part of the community. They want to be liked, they want to walk down the street and have people say hello to them. They don't want to walk down the street and have people say, "There's that Ms. Jones. Do you know the upsetting things she's doing in social studies. . . ." There is an implicit system by which people who are hired fit the norms of the

community. But the teachers themselves want to fit the norms--they don't want to rock the boat. They want to be accepted.

Another very important part of the teacher's social system that we often forget is the students. They may cause management problems, but teachers look to students for approval. And students have ideas about what they think should go on in school. One of the things that students think is that they should learn from printed material in school because that is what their brothers and sisters did and that is what mom and dad did and that is what they did last year. And so when teachers start doing other things--I have had this happen to me--the student comes up and says, "Well, when are we gonna get some regular type assignments"--those things that the student often dislikes doing, but knows he or she should be going because that is what is done in school.

So, there teachers are in a very real, complex social system; and here we are as curriculum developers, already labeled by many teachers as being out of contact with reality because we really don't know what goes on in schools. What are some implications? There are many, and I can touch on only a couple.

One is to urge caution as we work with teachers. On the one hand, we need to be sensitive so that teachers do not see us as perpetrating unrealistic views of what goes on in schools. On the other hand, we need to be sensitive to our selectivity in choosing teachers with whom to work. In my own curriculum development work I often have set out to find teachers who felt comfortable with my approach to social studies. Oftentimes I forgot that there were a great number of other teachers who were not comfortable with that way of looking at the world. If the hope is that we are going to have more widespread impact, we must pay particular attention to

the views and legitimate interests of those "other" teachers.

There are a number of other things we have to do. One is that we can't deal with curriculum development in isolation. We have to recognize that the teacher operates in a social system and that university professors, curriculum developers, and district supervisors are not necessarily a very important part of that social system. We need to deal with the question, which I don't think we've dealt with very adequately yet, of how can we become a part of the teachers' social system and help them modify that social system so that the pressures on teachers do not run directly counter to the kinds of things that we want to do.

In particular, we need to recognize how important the principal is to the teacher, and the fact that the presence or absence of the principal's support--both moral and financial--can make the difference in efforts by teachers to adopt new curricula. By the same token, teachers need the support of other teachers to try new things. Certainly, if a teacher's new project runs counter to the management and content expectations of other teachers in the school building, it has little chance of success.

We also need to be aware--and this is one of the things that really struck me in doing the interpretive report--that, in a very important sense, teachers have come down intuitively on one side of a basic issue of schooling in a democratic society. That basic issue involves the dilemma of change versus stability. A society has to have stability to survive. You also need innovators, you need people who are creative thinkers who create problems. The difficulty is that university professors and curriculum developers tend to plunk on the change side. We want everybody to be critical thinkers, we want them to be challenging, we want them to exercise

freedom of speech. We want them to speak out, write letters to the editors, protest, do all these great things. But Robert Dahl, the political scientist, said, you know it is a good thing for American society that all citizens don't take democracy seriously and participate all the time because the system couldn't stand it. And I suspect he is right. School teachers plunk on that other side of that dilemma--i.e., the stability side. Now that is not to say that they are totally right; you can overdo stability, too. But those of us at the university have often not recognized how important stability is, how important emotive commitment is. Gunnar Myrdal, in An American Dilemma has, for example, referred to commitment to our basic consitutional values as the "cement which holds the society together".

Clearly, it is vital for people such as you, working on innovative projects in the school, to keep in mind the orientations and concerns of teachers. Whether you succeed in influencing more than a token number of teachers and having more than a short term impact will depend to a large extent on your own sensitivity to the teacher's frame of reference. Concerns for management and control, for teaching the basics of reading and math, for inculcating American values, for socialization to the school as an institution as preparation for what lies ahead in future grades and in life are real and reality based. It is not only a matter of understanding teacher's beliefs, but of recognizing their legitimacy. This is the fundamental starting point for change.

All best luck with your projects! And many thanks for being such a good late-evening audience while I shared some generalizations from the NSF studies with you.